UNITED NATIONS

A

General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/46/218
5 June 1991

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Forty-sixth session
Item 70 of the preliminary list*

EFFECTS OF ATOMIC RADIATION

Report of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation

1. The United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation 1/ held its fortieth session at the Vienna International Centre from 13 to 17 May 1991. Mr. J. Maisin (Belgium), Mr. E. Létourneau (Canada) and Mr. L. Pinillos Ashton (Peru) served as Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Rapporteur, respectively.

2. The Committee took note of General Assembly resolution 45/71 of 11 December 1990, by which, inter alia, the Assembly endorsed the plans for future activities and requested the Committee to continue the review of important problems on radiation doses and effects and to report thereon to the Assembly at its forty-sixth session.

3. In technical discussions, the Committee considered recent information on sources of radiation, exposures and their effects. Those deliberations focused on review of documents prepared by the Secretariat on subjects that the Committee had selected as the most important topics for further study. The discussions concerned natural radiation exposures, man-made environmental radiation exposures, medical radiation exposures, occupational radiation exposures, radiation effects on the environment, epidemiological evaluations of radiation effects, radiation effects on the developing human brain, dose and dose-rate effects on radiation response, mechanisms of radiation oncogenesis, deterministic effects of radiation in children, hereditary effects of radiation, stimulation effects from low-level radiation, and

---

* A/46/50.

perception of radiation risks. The Committee made suggestions for the further development of these topics, in particular pointing out new and additional information to be considered.

4. The Committee discussed its efforts to obtain more extensive data for exposure evaluations. Many replies from Member States of the United Nations have been made to the Committee's request for data on medical and occupational radiation exposures, but further replies are needed. Some additional data are desirable in most areas discussed, particularly on levels of radon indoors and on releases of radioactive materials from industrial uses of materials and from activities associated with the nuclear fuel cycle.

5. The Committee expressed the hope that Member States of the United Nations, the specialized agencies and the International Atomic Energy Agency would continue to assist in this work, especially by providing relevant information on the subjects of interest for the future programme of study, so that its deliberations could be based on the broadest and most up-to-date scientific and technical information.

6. The Committee was given a presentation of the results and conclusions of the international review undertaken during the last year to assess the consequences in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics of the Chernobyl accident. The Committee was pleased to note the high quality of the very extensive studies carried out by the project. The Committee also noted that the results were consistent with its own assessments of the wider consequences of the accident published in its 1988 report. Many scientists associated with the Committee as well as the secretariat staff have participated actively in the scientific evaluations. The methodology developed by the Committee for dose evaluations has provided a fundamental basis for comparisons of results. The Committee has expressed the hope that the international conference to conclude the project and the report to be published will clarify the scientific issues and lead to better public understanding of the accident and of the consequences that are associated with it.

7. The Committee has noted that, in more general terms, there is a continuing need for further knowledge of radiation sources and of the inevitable and circumstantial exposures that are a part of human life. With better appreciation of the potential effects of radiation, and understanding of the underlying mechanisms, more objective response and more accurate perspective with regard to radiation risks could be gained. The Committee will continue to direct its efforts towards a broader understanding of ionizing radiation sources and effects.

8. The Committee decided to hold its forty-first session at the Vienna International Centre from 15 to 19 June 1992.

Notes

1/ The terms of reference of the Committee, which was established by the General Assembly at its tenth session in 1955, are set out in resolution 913 (X) of 3 December 1955. The Committee was originally composed of the following Member States: Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Czechoslovakia, Egypt, France, India, Japan, Mexico, Sweden, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America. By resolution 3154 C (XXVIII) of 14 December 1973, the Assembly decided to increase the Committee's membership by up to five additional members, and the following Member States were appointed by the President of the Assembly in consultation with the Chairmen of the regional groups: Federal Republic of Germany, Indonesia, Peru, Poland and Sudan. By its resolution 41/62 B of 3 December 1986, the Assembly decided to increase the membership to a maximum of 21 members and invited the People's Republic of China to become a member of the Committee.